A

DECLARATION

OF THE

LORD-GENERAL

AND HIS

COUNCEL of OFFICERS.

Shewing the Grounds and Reaſons for the Diſſolution of the late

PARLIAMENT.

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A DECLARATION *of the Lord General and his Councel of Officers.*

OUr Intention is not to give an accompt at this time of the Grounds, which first moved us to take up Arms, and engage our Lives and all that was dear unto us, in this Cause; nor to mind in this Declaration the various Dispensations through which Divine Providence hath led us, or the witnesse the Lord hath born, and the many signall Testimonies of acceptance, which he hath given to the sincere endeavours of his unworthy Servants, whilest they were contesting with the many and great difficulties as wel in the Wars, as other Transactions in the three Nations; being necessitated for the defence of the same Cause they first asserted, to have recourse unto Extraordinary Actions, the same being evident by former Declarations published on that behalf.

After it had pleased God not onely to reduce *Ireland*, and give in *Scotland*, but so marvellously to appear for his people at *Worcester*, that those Nations were reduced to a great degree of Peace, and *England* to perfect quiet, and thereby the Parliament had oportunity to give the people the harvest of all their labour, blood, and treasure, and to settle a due Liberty both in reference to Civill and Spirituall things, whereunto they were obliged by their duty, their engagements, as also the great and wonderfull things which God had wrought for them: It was matter of much grief to the good and wel-affected of the Land, to observe the little progress which was

made therein; who thereupon applyed to the Army, expecting Redreſs by their means : Notwithſtanding which, the Army being unwilling to meddle with the Civill Authority, in matters ſo properly appertaining to it, it was agreed, That his Excellency and Officers of the Army, which were Members of Parliament, ſhould be deſired to move the Parliament to proceed vigorouſly in Reforming what was amiſs in Government, and to the ſettling of the Commonwealth upon a Foundation of Juſtice and Righteouſneſs; which having done, We hoped that the Parliament would ſeaſonably have anſwered our expectation; but finding (to our grief) delayes therein, We renewed our deſires in an humble Petition to them, which was preſented in *Auguſt* laſt : And although they at that time, ſignifying their good acceptance thereof, returned us thanks, and referred the particulars thereof to a Committee of the Houſe; yet no conſiderable effect was produced, nor any ſuch progreſs made, as might imply their real intentions to accompliſh what was petitioned for: But on the contrary, there more and more appeared amongſt them an averſion to the things themſelves, with much bitterneſs and oppoſition to the people of God and his Spirit acting in them ; which grew ſo *prevalent*, that thoſe perſons of honor and integrity amongſt them, who had eminently appeared for God, and the Publick good, both before and *throughout* this *War*, were rendred of no further uſe in Parliament, then by meeting with a corrupt party to give them countenance to carry on their ends, and for effecting the deſire they had of perpetuating themſelves in the Supream Government. For which purpoſe the ſaid Party long oppoſed, and frequently declared themſelves againſt having a new Repreſentative : And when they ſaw themſelves neceſsitated to take that Bill into conſideration, they reſolved to make uſe of it to recruit the Houſe with Perſons of the ſame ſpirit and temper, thereby to perpetuate their own ſitting. Which intention, divers of the activeſt amongſt them did manifeſt, labouring to perſwade others to a conſent therein ; And the better to effect this, divers Petitions preparing from ſeveral

Counties

Counties for the continuance of this Parliament were encouraged, if not set on foot by many of them.

For obviating of these evils, the Officers of the Army obtained severall Meetings with some of the Parliament, to consider what fitting means and remedy might be applyed to prevent the same; But such endeavors proving altogether ineffectuall, it became most evident to the Army, as they doubt not it also is to all considering Persons, that this Parliament through the corruption of some, the jealousie of others, the non-attendance and negligence of many, would never answer those ends which God, his People, and the whole Nation expected from them: But that this Cause which the Lord hath so greatly blessed and bore witness to, must needs languish under their hands, and by degrees be wholly lost, and the lives, liberties and comforts of his People delivered into their enemies hands.

All which being sadly and seriously considered by the honest people of this Nation, as well as by the Army, and wisdom and direction being sought from the Lord; it seemed to be a duty incumbent upon us, who had seen so much of the power and presence of God going along with us, to consider of some more effectuall means to secure the Cause which the good People of this Commonwealth had been so long engaged in, and to establish Righteousness and Peace in these Nations.

And after much debate it was judged necessary and agreed upon, that the Supream Authority should be by the Parliament devolved upon known Persons, men fearing God, and of approved integrity, and the Government of the Commonwealth committed unto them for a time, as the most hopefull way to encourage and countenance all Gods People, reform the Law, and administer Justice impartially: Hoping thereby the People might forget Monarchy, and understanding their true interest in the election of Successive Parliaments, may have the Government settled upon a true Basis, without hazard to this glorious Cause, or necessitating to keep up Armies for the defence of the same.

And

And being ſtill reſolved to uſe all means poſſible to avoid extraordinary courſes, we prevailed with about twenty Members of Parliament to give us a Conference, with whom we freely and plainly debated the neceſſity and Juſtneſſe of our Propoſals on that behalf: And did evidence that thoſe, and not the Act under their conſideration, would moſt probably bring forth ſomething anſwerable to that Work, the Foundation whereof God himſelf hath laid, and is now carrying on in the World.

The which notwithſtanding, found no acceptance, but inſtead thereof, it was offered, that the way was to continue ſtill this preſent Parliament, as being that from which we might reaſonably expect all good things. And this being vehemently inſiſted upon, did much confirm us in our apprehenſions, that not any Love to a Repreſentative, but the making uſe thereof to recruit, and ſo perpetuate themſelves, was their aim.

They being plainly dealt with about this and told, that neither the Nation, the Honeſt Intereſt, nor we our ſelves would be deluded by ſuch dealings; they did agree to meet again the next day in the afternoon for mutuall ſatisfaction, it being conſented unto by the Members preſent, that endeavours ſhould be uſed, that nothing in the mean time ſhould be done in Parliament that might exclude or fruſtrate the Propoſals before mentioned.

Notwithſtanding this, the next morning the Parliament did make more haſte then uſuall, in carrying on their ſaid Act, being helped on therein by ſome of the perſons engaged to us the night before; none of them which were then preſent, endeavouring to oppoſe the ſame: And being ready to put the main Queſtion for conſumating the ſaid Act, whereby our aforeſaid Propoſals would have been rendered void, and the way of bringing them into fair and full debate in Parliament obſtructed; for preventing whereof, and all the ſad and evill conſequences which muſt upon the grounds aforeſaid have enſued, & whereby at one blow the Intereſt of all honeſt men, and of this glorious Cauſe had been in danger to be laid in the duſt, and theſe

Nations

Nations embroiled in new Troubles, at a time when our Enemies abroad are watching all advantages againſt us, and ſome of them actually engaged in War with us: We have been neceſſitated, though with much reluctancy to put an end to this Parliament; which yet we have done (we hope) out of an honeſt heart, preferring this Cauſe above our Names, Lives, Families, or Intereſts, how dear ſoever; with clear intentions and reall purpoſes of heart, to call to the Government, Perſons of approved fidelity and honeſty, believing, that as none wiſe will expect to gather Grapes of Thornes; ſo good men will hope, that if perſons ſo qualified be choſen, the Fruits of a Juſt and a Righteous Reformation, ſo long prayed and wiſhed for, will, by the Bleſſing of God, be in due time obtained, to the refreſhing of all thoſe good Hearts who have been panting after thoſe things.

Much more might have been ſaid, if it had been our deſire to juſtifie our ſelvs by aſperſing others, and raking into the miſgovernment of Affairs; but we ſhal conclude with this: That as we have been led by neceſſity & Providence, to act as we have done, even beyond & above our own thoughts & deſires: ſo we ſhal, and do, in that of this great Work which is behinde, put our ſelves wholly upon the Lord for a bleſſing; profeſſing, we look not to ſtand one day without his ſupport, much leſſe to bring to paſſe any of the things mentioned and deſired, without his aſſiſtance, and therefore do ſolemnly deſire and expect, that all men, as they would not provok the Lord to their own deſtruction, ſhould wait for ſuch iſſue as he ſhall bring forth, and to follow their buſineſſe with peaceable ſpirits; wherein we promiſe them Protection by his aſſiſtance.

And for thoſe who profeſſe their fear and Love to the Name of God, that ſeeing in a great meaſure, for their ſakes, and for righteouſneſſe ſake, we have taken our Lives in our hands to do theſe things, they would be inſtant with the Lord day and night on our behalf, that we may obtain grace from him; and ſeeing we have made ſo often mention of his Name, that we

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may not do the least dishonour thereunto: which indeed would be our confusion, and a stain to the whole profession of Godlinesse.

We beseech them also to live in all humility, meekness, righteousnesse and love one towards another, and towards all men that so they may put to silence the ignorance of the foolish, who falsly accuse them; and to know, that the late great and and glorious dispensations wherein the Lord hath so wonderfully appeared in bringing forth these things by the travell and bloud of his Children, ought to oblige them so to walk in the wisdom and love of Christ, as may cause others to honour their holy profession, because they see Christ to be in them of a truth.

We do further purpose before it be long, more particularly to shew the grounds of our Proceedings, and the Reasons of this late great Action and Change, which in this we have but hinted at.

And we do lastly declare, That all Judges, Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, Majors, Bayliffs, Committees and Commissioners, and all other Civill Officers and Publick Ministers whatsoever within this Commonwealth, or any parts thereof, do proceed in their respective Places and Offices; and all Persons whatsoever are to give obedience to them as fully as when the Parliament was sitting.

Signed in the name, and by the appointment of His Excellency the Lord Generall, and His Councell of Officers.

White-hall; *Apr.* 22. 1653. VVILL. MALYN Secret.

FINIS.